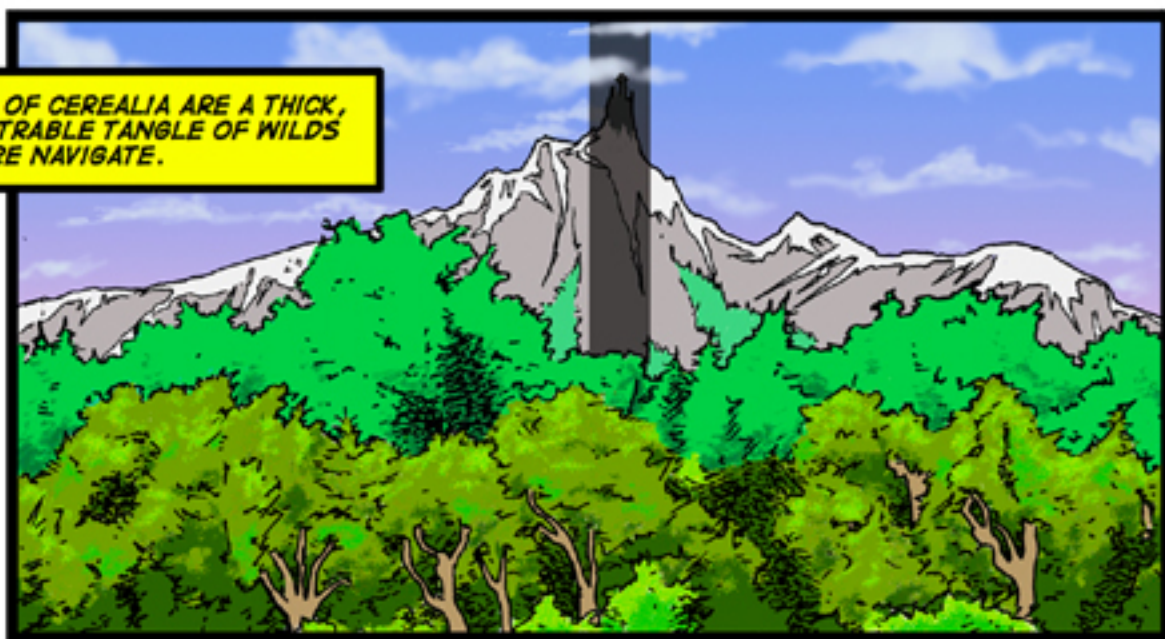


THE FORESTS OF CEREALIA ARE A THICK,
HIGH-IMPENETRABLE TANGLE OF WILDS
THAT FEW DARE NAVIGATE.



THOSE WHO DO ARE USUALLY
LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO HIDE.



FROM THE LAW, FROM THEIR PASTS,
FROM THEMSELVES.

EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER, THEY ALL
FIND THEMSELVES HERE.



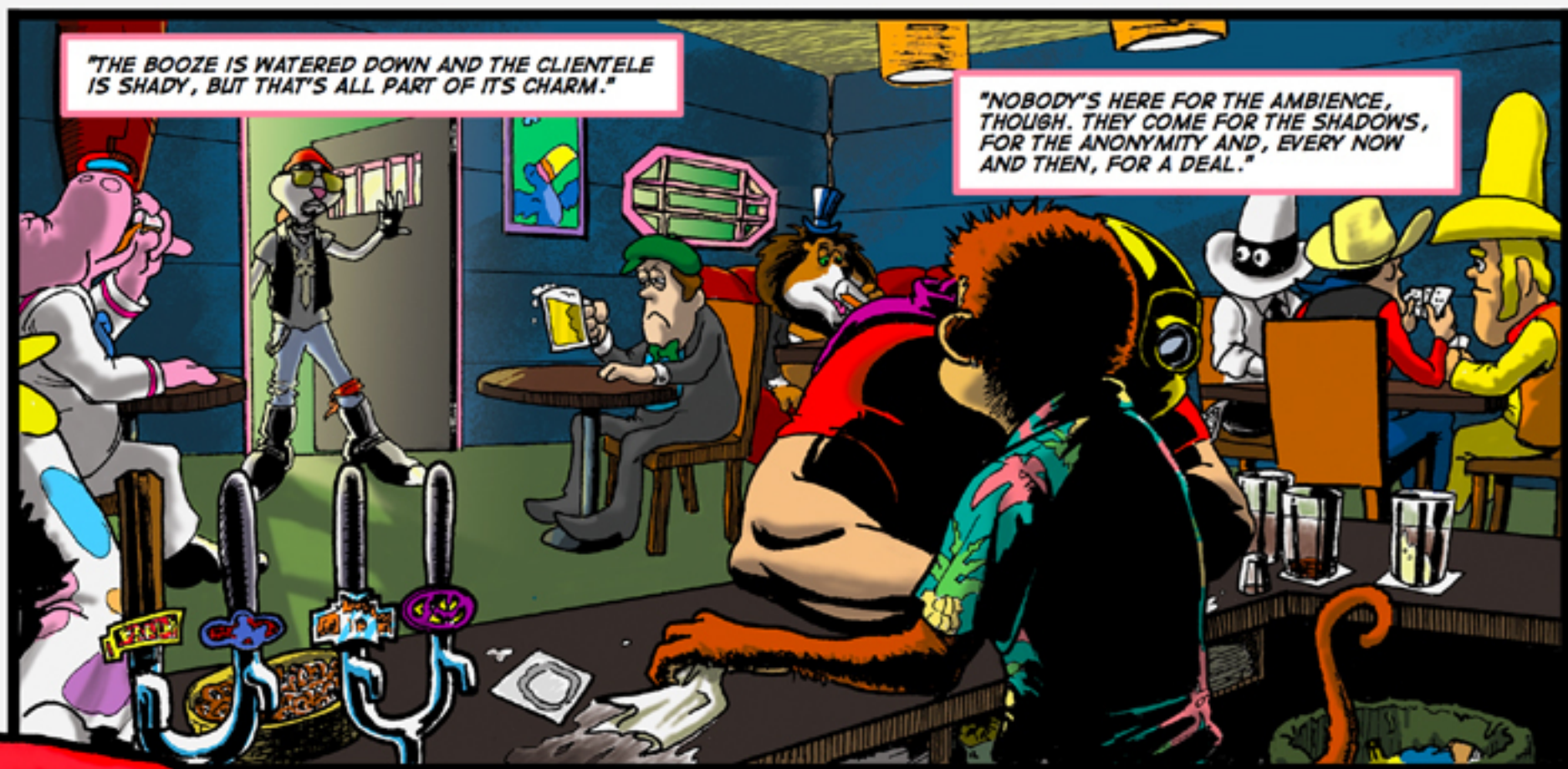
"EVERYBODY COMES TO SAM'S."

BREAKFAST of the GODS



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O CAP'N, MY CAP'N



"THE BOOZE IS WATERED DOWN AND THE CLIENTELE IS SHADY, BUT THAT'S ALL PART OF ITS CHARM."

"NOBODY'S HERE FOR THE AMBIENCE, THOUGH. THEY COME FOR THE SHADOWS, FOR THE ANONYMITY AND, EVERY NOW AND THEN, FOR A DEAL."



"THAT'S WHAT BROUGHT ME."

"CRUNCH HIRED ME BECAUSE I'M THE BEST AT WHAT I DO."

"I WATCH. I LISTEN. I BLEND IN."

"HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT IS THE NAME OF THE GAME AND YOU'RE LOOKIN' AT THE CHAMP."

"FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, I'M INVISIBLE."



G'DAY, RABBIT!
LONG TIME NO
SEE, MATE.

...URK...





"THAT'S THE WAY SAM
LIKES TO DO BUSINESS."

"HE KEEPS YOU WAITING.
KEEPS YOU THIRSTY AND
BUYING."



"THE STINK OF DESPERATION
IS STRONG IN THIS JOINT.
SMELLS LIKE SWEAT AND
BAD MILK."

"AND EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK IS A
REMINDER THAT NOT ALL STORIES
HAVE HAPPY ENDINGS."

"LIKE THIS ONE HERE."

CAUGHT ME ON A
BAD DAY IS ALL, YA
OUTER SPACE
FREAK....



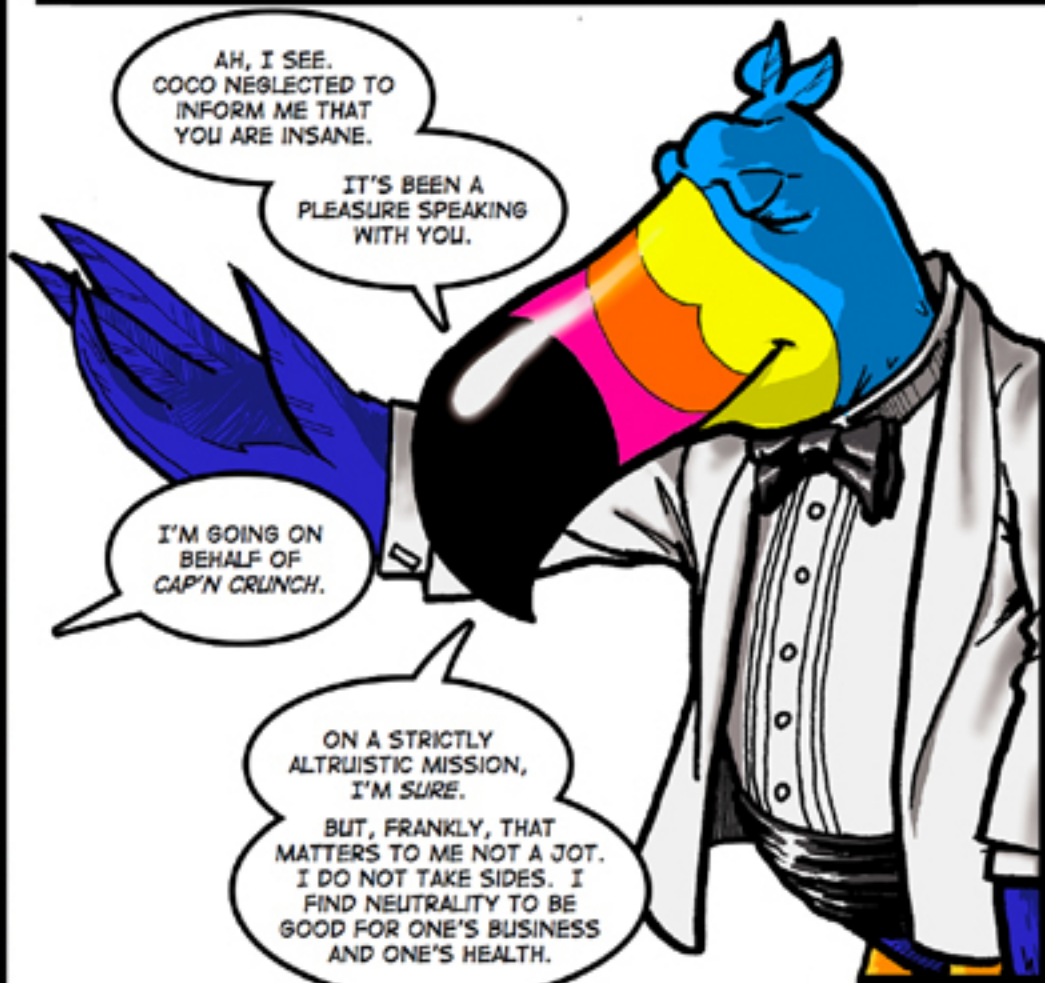
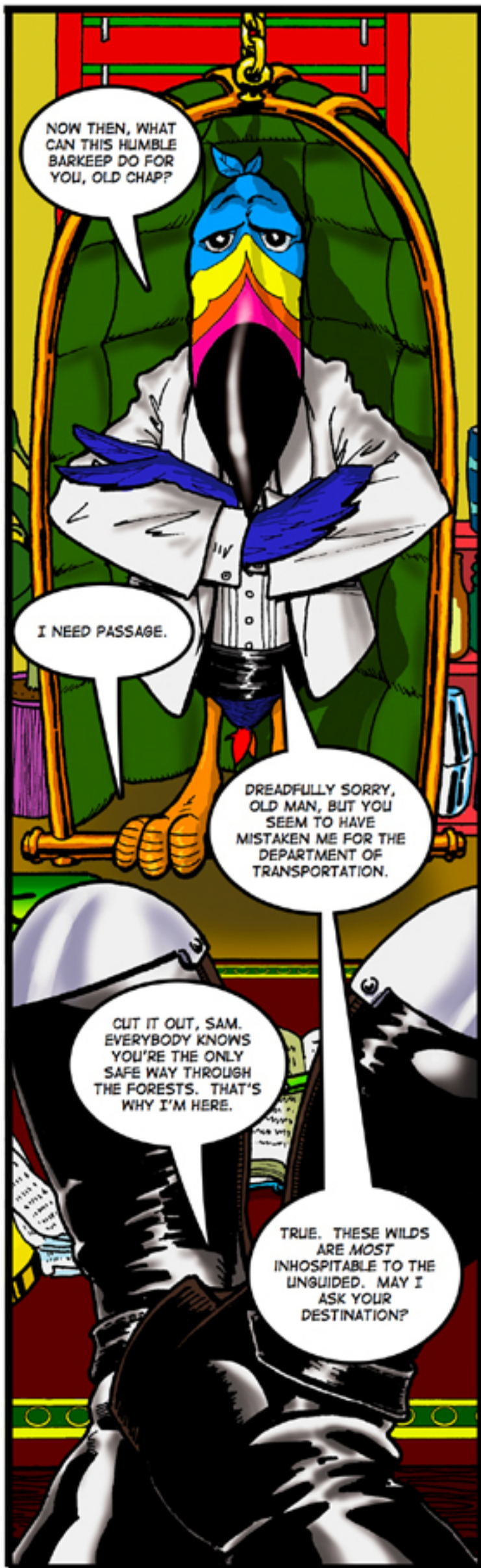
"QUAKE USED TO BE ONE OF THE
MOST POWERFUL GUYS AROUND.
HE COULD CRACK THE EARTH WITH
A FLICK OF HIS WRIST."

"BUT YEARS AGO THERE WAS A
CONTEST BETWEEN QUAKE AND
AN ALIEN JOKER WHO LIVED
AMONG US FOR A WHILE. A
CONTEST THAT QUAKE LOST."

"HE NEVER QUITE RECOVERED
FROM THE BLOW."

...ANY TIME YOU'RE
READY F'R A REMATCH,
YOU KNOW WHERE T'
FIND ME, YA PROPELLER-
HEADED SUNNUVABITCH...







OKAY, SERIOUSLY,
HOLD UP FOR A
GODDAMN SECOND!

DISGUSTING HABIT,
OLD FRUIT.
TERRIBLY BAD FOR
YOU, YOU KNOW.

YEAH, WELL, SO'S
AGREEING TO INFILTRATE
THE HQ OF AN EVIL
MASTERMIND, BUT HERE
WE ARE.

MOST OF THOSE WHO
COME TO ME FOR
PASSAGE ARE LOOKING
TO AVOID CHOCULA
AND HIS MINIONS.

YOU'RE THE FIRST TO
ASK FOR DIRECTIONS
TO HIS FRONT DOOR.

RENT DON'T
PAY ITSELF.

READY TO
VENTURE
ONWARD?

YEAH.
SO HOW DO YOU
KNOW WHICH
WAY IS UP IN ALL
OF THIS?

I JUST FOLLOW
MY NOSE. IT
ALWAYS KNOWS.

HOURS PASS AND THE TERRAIN SLOWLY
INCLINES AS THEY REACH THE FOOT OF
THE FROSTED PEAKS AND A WALL OF
DARKNESS THAT STRETCHES AS FAR AS
THE EYE CAN SEE.

THIS IS WHERE I
LEAVE YOU, MY
FLUFFY TAILED
FRIEND.

JUST DON'T
FORGET TO BE BACK
HERE IN TWO DAYS
FOR THE RETURN
TRIP. THAT'S THE
DEAL.

AS I AM A BIRD OF MY
WORD, I SHALL BE
HERE. THE QUESTION,
MY DEAR FELLOW, IS
WHETHER YOU WILL BE.

SO THIS IS "NIGHT." WELL, IT'S DARK ENOUGH.

I START CLIMBING, MAKING USE OF THE MOONLIGHT AND THE OCCASIONAL FLASH OF LIGHTNING TO HELP ME FIND MY WAY.

IT'S SLOW GOING AS I FEEL FOR EACH STEP IN THIS SHADOW WORLD WHERE ANYTHING COULD BE HIDING, WATCHING.

MY TEETH ARE RATTLING, AND NOT JUST FROM THE COLD.

I'M A GUY WHO KNOWS A THING OR TWO ABOUT SECRETS BUT HERE, THIS PLACE, IT'S LIKE I'VE PLUNGED INTO THE BLACK HEART OF EVERY SECRET EVER KEPT.

WHAT SEEMS LIKE AN ETERNITY OF SUCH LYRICAL WAXING PASSES UNTIL I COME UPON IT AT LAST --

-- A STONY BLACK CITADEL STABBING AT THE SKY.

CASTLE CHOCULA!





"CAN'T EXACTLY KNOCK ON THE FRONT DOOR SO I FOLLOW MY OWN NOSE TO A LESS DIGNIFIED POINT OF ENTRY."

"NOW THIS IS LUCKY."

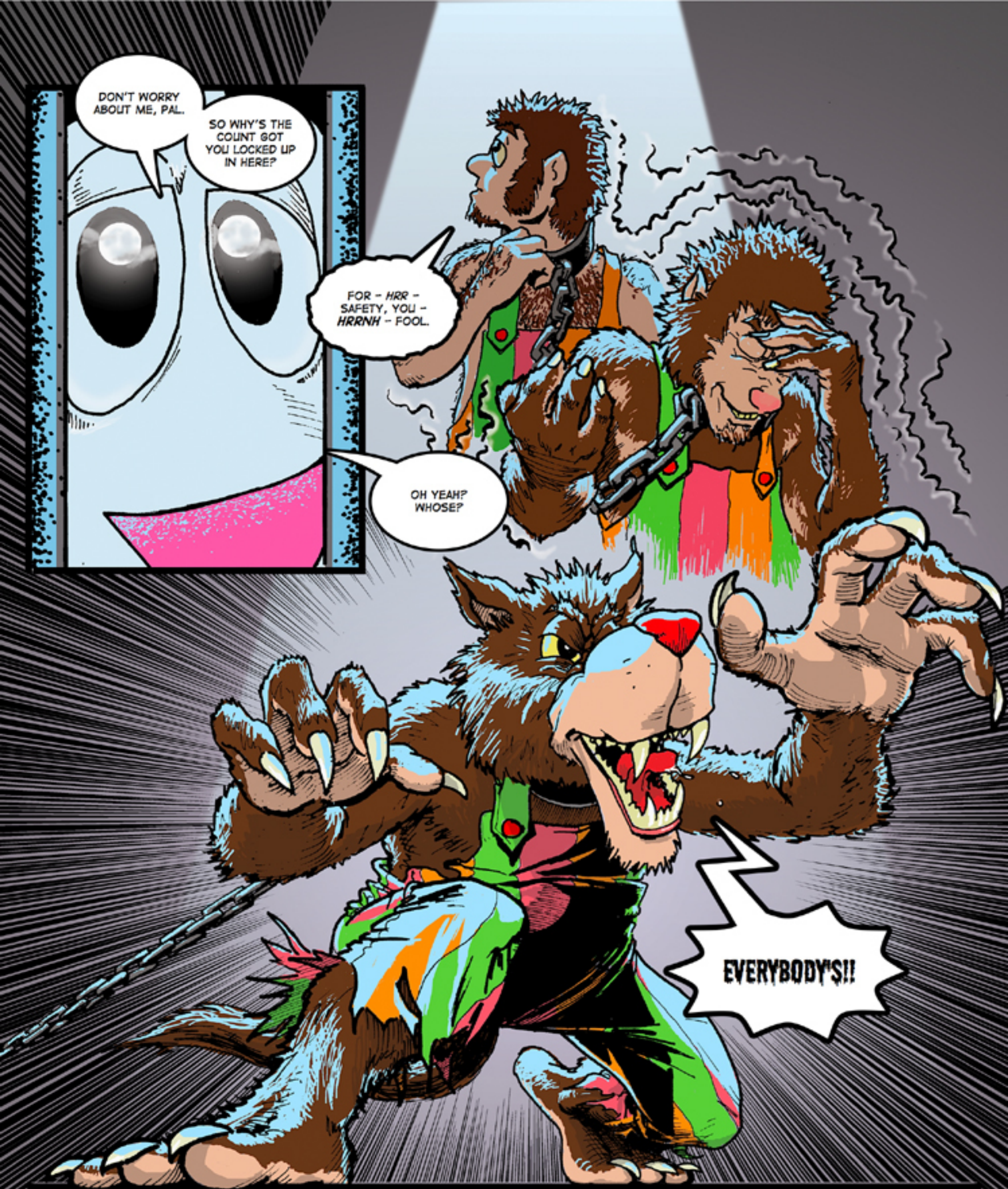
"CRUNCH'LL DEFINITELY TO KNOW WHAT POOR SAPS THE COUNT'S GOT LOCKED UP IN HERE."

PSSST!

HEY -- BUDDY--

WHO ARE YOU?

NO, IT DOESN'T MATTER. WHOEVER YOU ARE, YOU NEED TO GET AWAY.





PLEASE, PLEASE
LET US GO.

WHO --
SNAP?!

RABBIT? DID THEY
GET YOU TOO?

NO, I--
ARE YOU AND YOUR
BROTHERS OKAY?
EVERYBODY THOUGHT
YOU'D BEEN, YOU KNOW,
DISCONTINUED.

WE'RE ALIVE, YES,
BUT WE'RE A LONG
WAY FROM "OKAY."

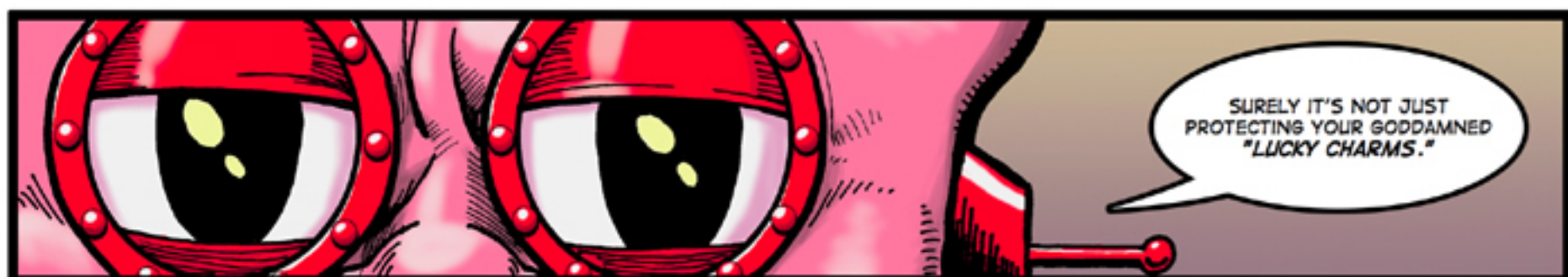
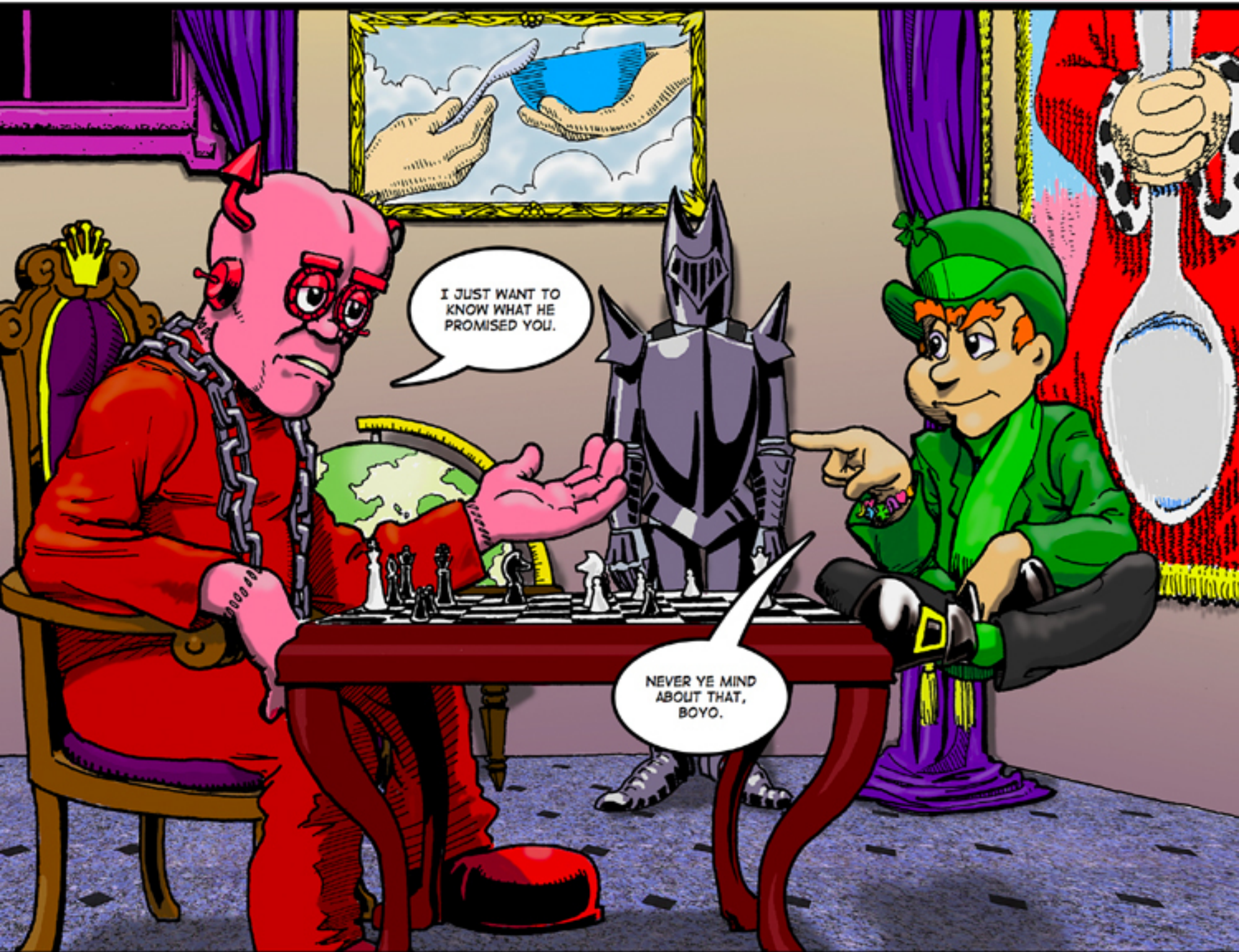
CAN YOU HELP
US?

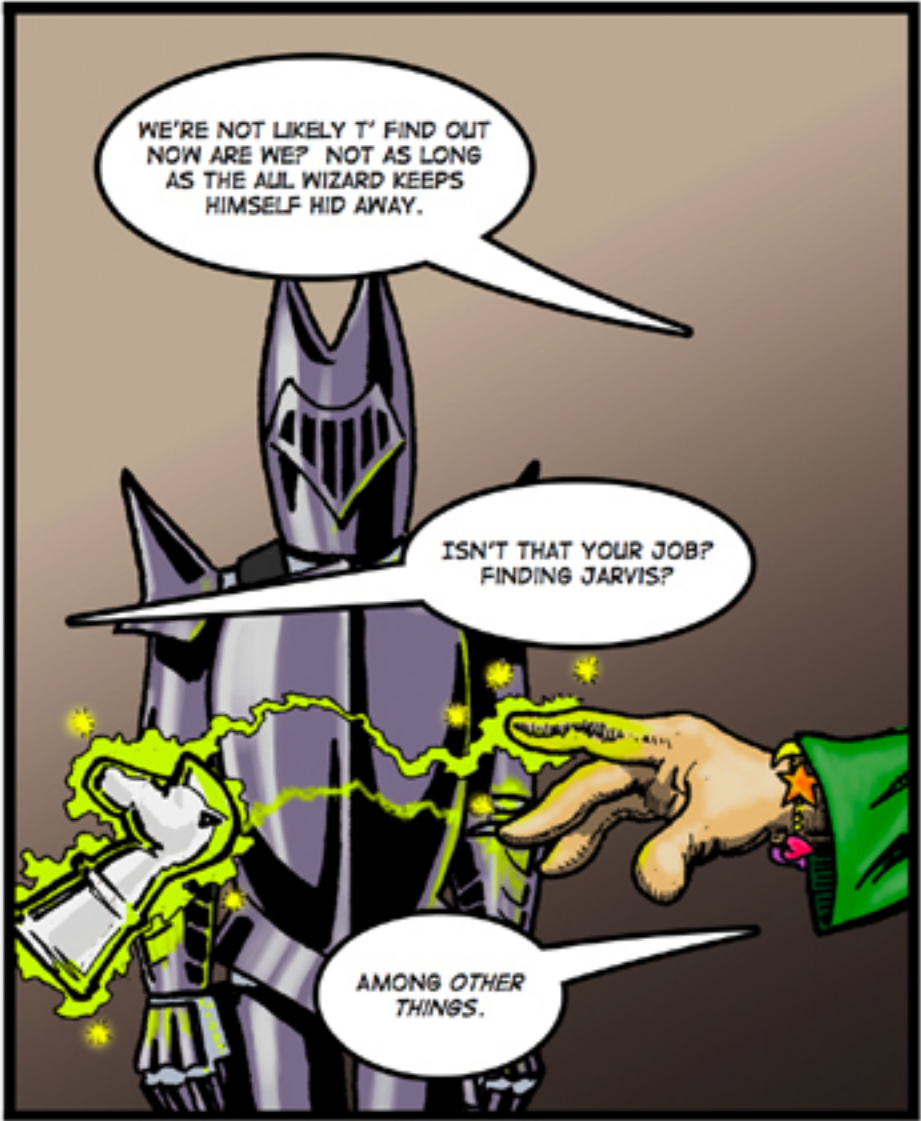
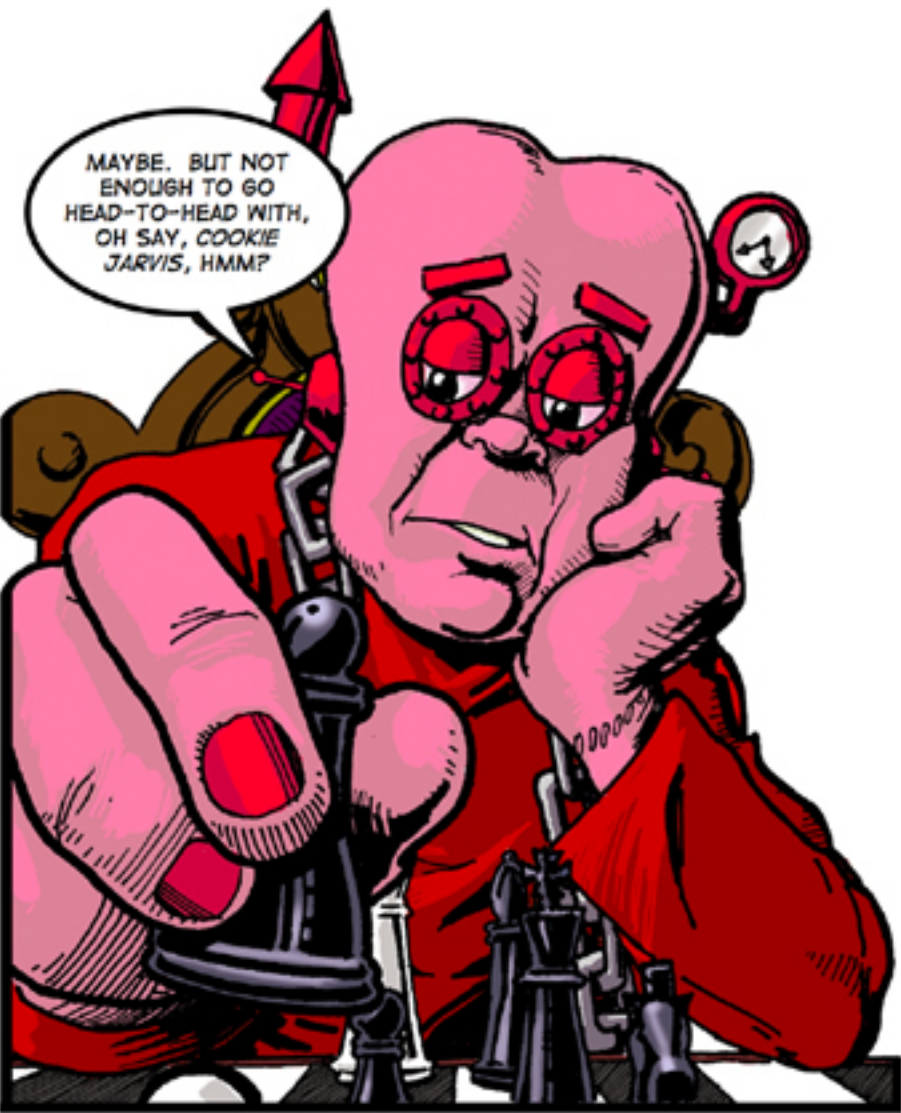
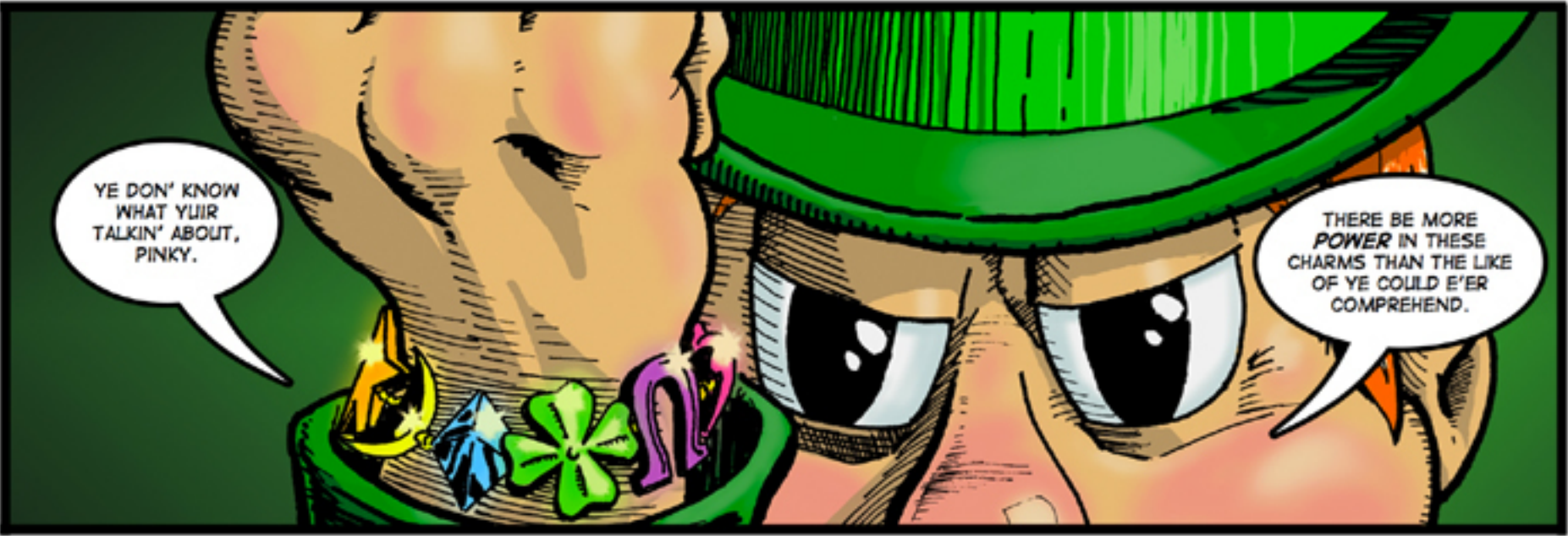
UH, THAT'S NOT - NOT THE
JOB. SORRY. BUT I'M SURE
ONCE I TELL THE CAP'N
WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE,
HE'LL RALLY THE TROOPS OR
SOMETHING.


JUST HANG IN THERE.

WHAT ELSE CAN
WE DO?

MNNRPHNGR.







...MORE DIRECT METHODS.
I BELIEVE IT'S TIME TO
CONFRONT THE OLD MAN
FACE TO FACE.

HE HAS THE
INFORMATION, I
KNOW IT. WHO ELSE
WOULD THE KING AND
HIS WIZARD HAVE
TRUSTED?

However you
proceed, Count,
just don't forget
our arrangement.

OF COURSE NOT, MY
FRIEND. WHEN NIGHT FALLS
AT LAST OVER THIS LAND,
YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE WILL
MEET NO RESISTANCE.
CHOCULA OUT.

"UH-OH."

FRANK, PLEASE
ESCORT OUR GUEST TO
THE THRONE ROOM.



SO.

CRUNCH HAS SENT
A SPY, HAS HE?



DON'T KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE TALKIN'
ABOUT, GRUESOME.
I WAS JUST TAKIN'
IN THE SIGHTS.



HHHUUU

SMART ASS.



LET ME ALLAY
YOUR FEARS,
RABBIT. WE WILL
NOT HARM YOU.

IN FACT, YOU
WILL BE ALLOWED
TO LEAVE.

FOR THIS IS HOW YOU WILL
DELIVER CAP'N CRUNCH
INTO MY HANDS.

KRRAKOOM



THE GHOST HAS NOT BEEN AUDIENCE TO THE FAUSTIAN BARGAIN BEING STRUCK IN THE THRONE ROOM. HE HAS HAD OTHER THINGS ON HIS MIND --- OR IN IT.

BOOOBERRY

HUH? WHAT IS IT?

IT COMES FROM EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE. FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT AND THEN SOMEWHERE ELSE ENTIRELY.

BOOBERRY
YOUR TIME COMES

BOOBERRY

A VOICE THAT CALLS TO HIM BUT WILL NOT ANSWER IN RETURN.

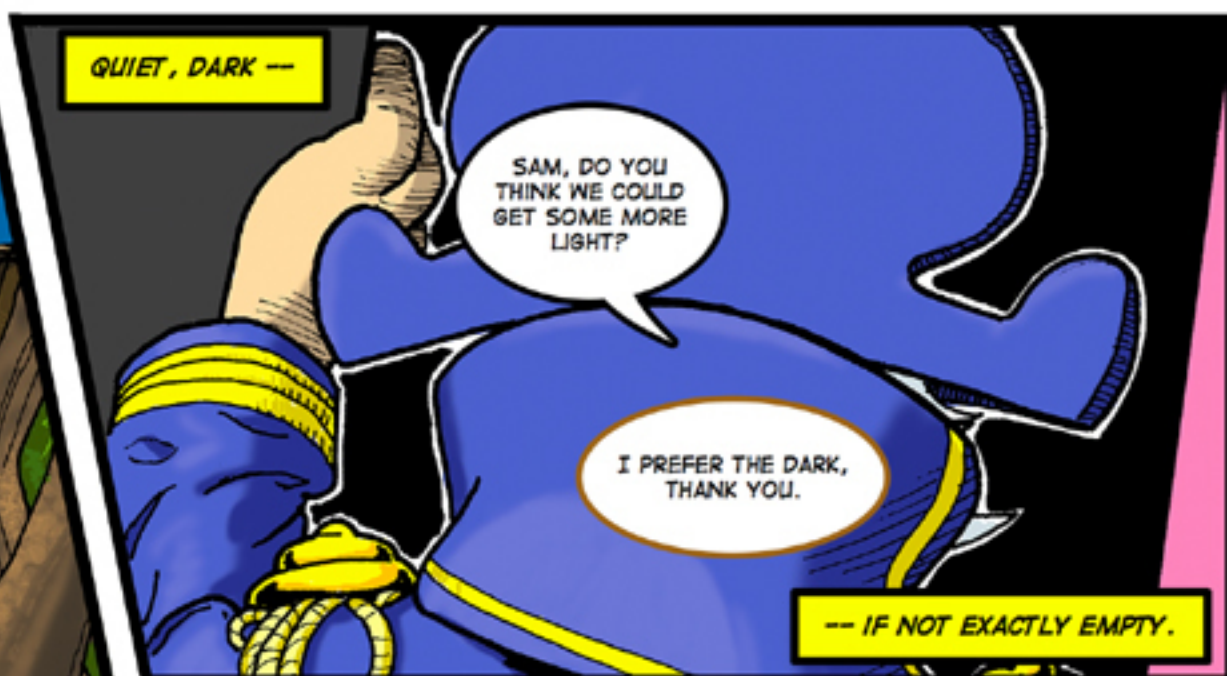
THIS ISN'T FUNNY ANYMORE. WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

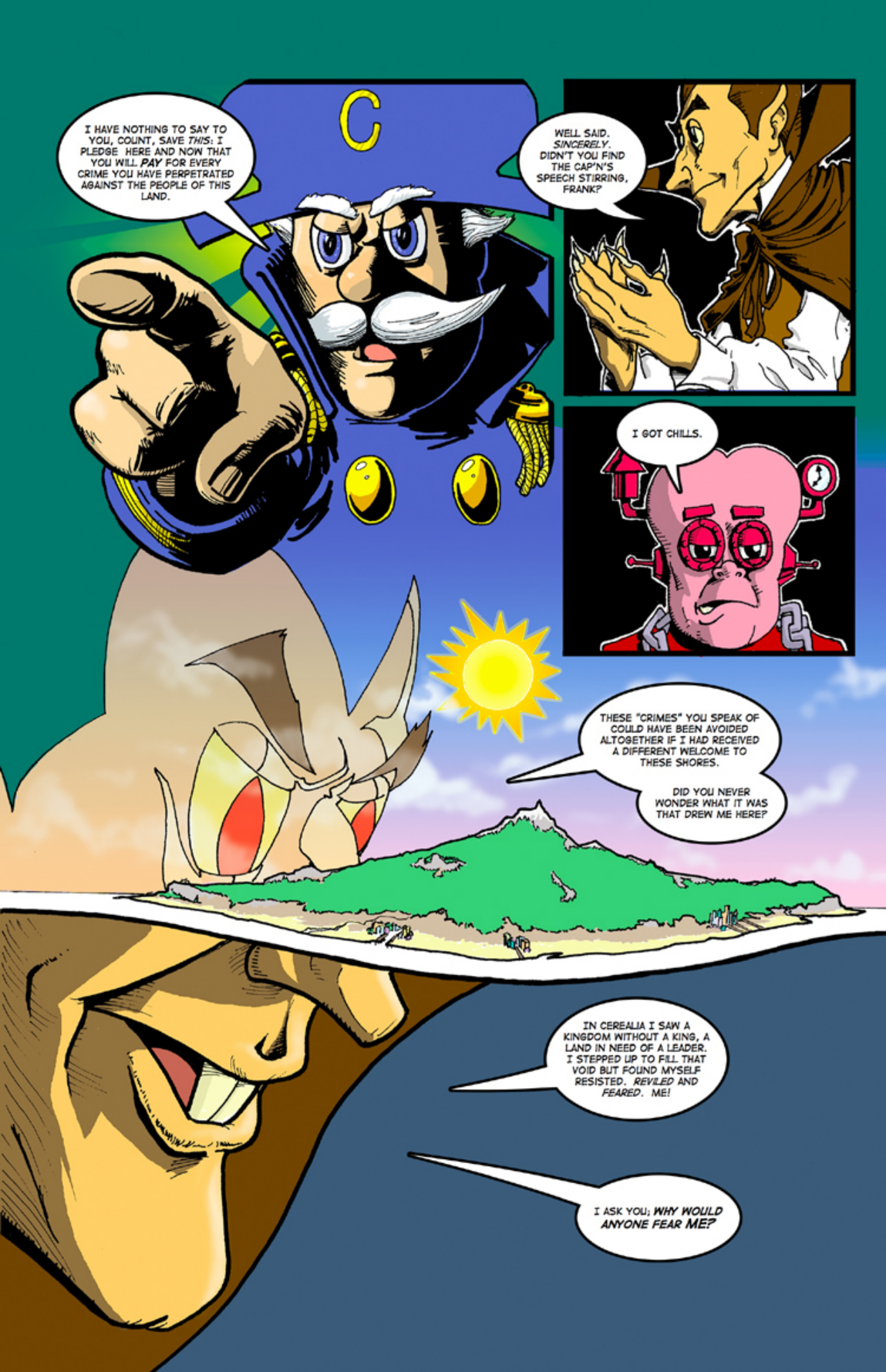
BOOBERRY

WHAT'RE YE ON ABOUT? FADE AWAY, YE BOTHERSOME WEE TAIBHSE!

BOOOBERRY
YOU MUST MAKE A CHOICE

LEAVING BOOBERRY TO PONDER THE QUESTION:
IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A GHOST TO BE HAUNTED?





I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU, COUNT, SAVE *THIS*: I PLEDGE HERE AND NOW THAT YOU WILL *PAY* FOR EVERY CRIME YOU HAVE PERPETRATED AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND.

WELL SAID. SINCERELY. DIDN'T YOU FIND THE CAP'N'S SPEECH STIRRING, FRANK?

I GOT CHILLS.

THESE "CRIMES" YOU SPEAK OF COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED ALTOGETHER IF I HAD RECEIVED A DIFFERENT WELCOME TO THESE SHORES.

DID YOU NEVER WONDER WHAT IT WAS THAT DREW ME HERE?

IN CEREALIA I SAW A KINGDOM WITHOUT A KING, A LAND IN NEED OF A LEADER. I STEPPED UP TO FILL THAT VOID BUT FOUND MYSELF RESISTED. REVILED AND FEARED. ME!

I ASK YOU; *WHY* WOULD ANYONE FEAR ME?



YOU BROUGHT AN EVIL
MAGIC TO THIS LAND. YOU
SPOILED OUR EVERLASTING
MORNING WITH DARKNESS.



BUT IT'S STILL
TOO BRIGHT
AROUND HERE
FOR YOUR
LIKING, I TAKE
IT?



YOU KNOW
DAMN WELL
IT IS!!

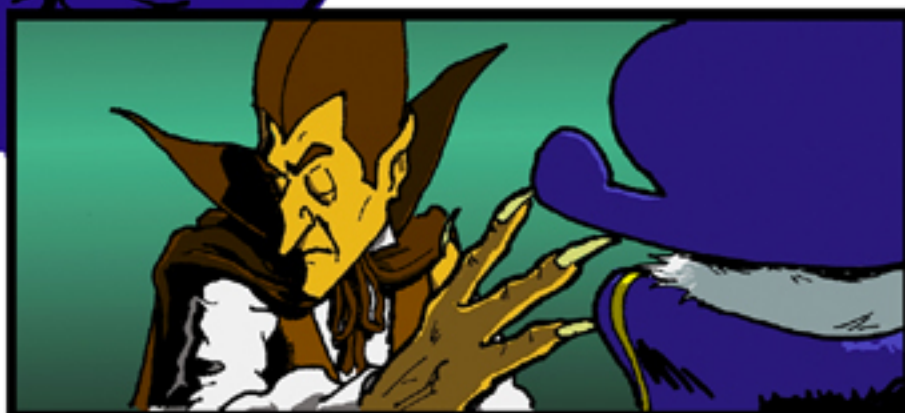
JUST AS YOU KNOW THIS
IS YOUR **LAST CHANCE**
TO TELL ME WHAT
ENCHANTMENT THE KING
AND HIS PET WIZARD
CAST OVER THIS LAND TO
PROTECT IT FROM THE
FALL OF NIGHT!

I'VE -KK- BEEN AROUND
FOR -HK- A LONG TIME,
COUNT. I KNOW A LOT
OF -BK- THINGS.

FOR INSTANCE,
-BAK- I KNOW -KK-
WHAT YOU ARE!



OH YES. AND -HKK-
AND I WOULD MOST
ASSUREDLY RATHER DIE
THAN -HKK- HELP YOU
TURN CEREALIA INTO
YOUR **FEEDING**
GROUND.



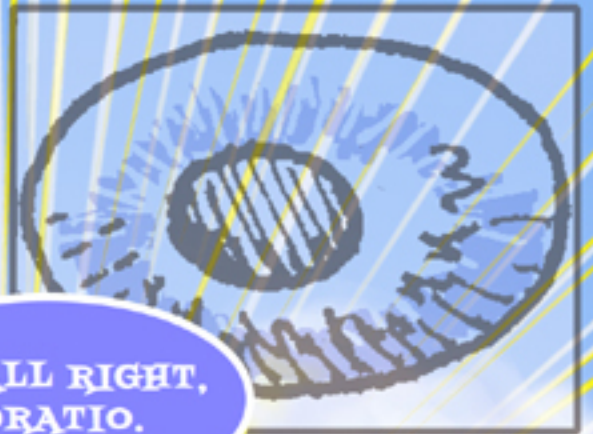
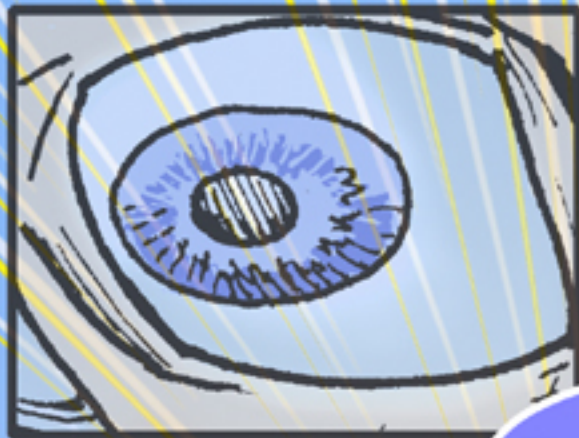
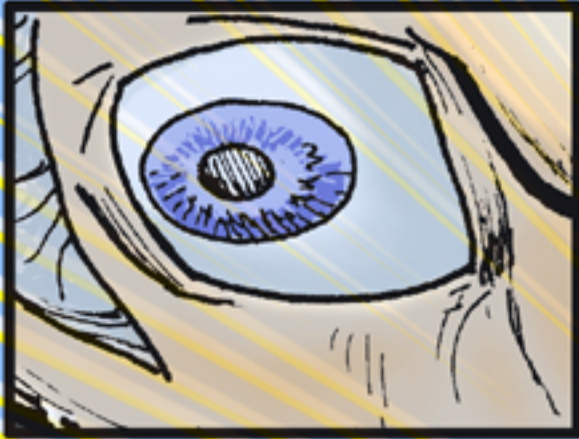
DID YOU EXPECT
ME TO **KILL YOU**
JUST THEN?

WHY YES, I
RATHER THOUGHT
YOU MIGHT.

NONSENSE.

IF YOU **TRULY** KNEW ME AS WELL
AS YOU CLAIM, YOU WOULD KNOW I
PREFER NOT TO DIRTY MY OWN
HANDS WITH SUCH MATTERS.





IT'S ALL RIGHT, HORATIO.

YOUR LONG VOYAGE IS OVER.



COME HOME.



LATER....

HORRIBLE -
JUST HORRIBLE.

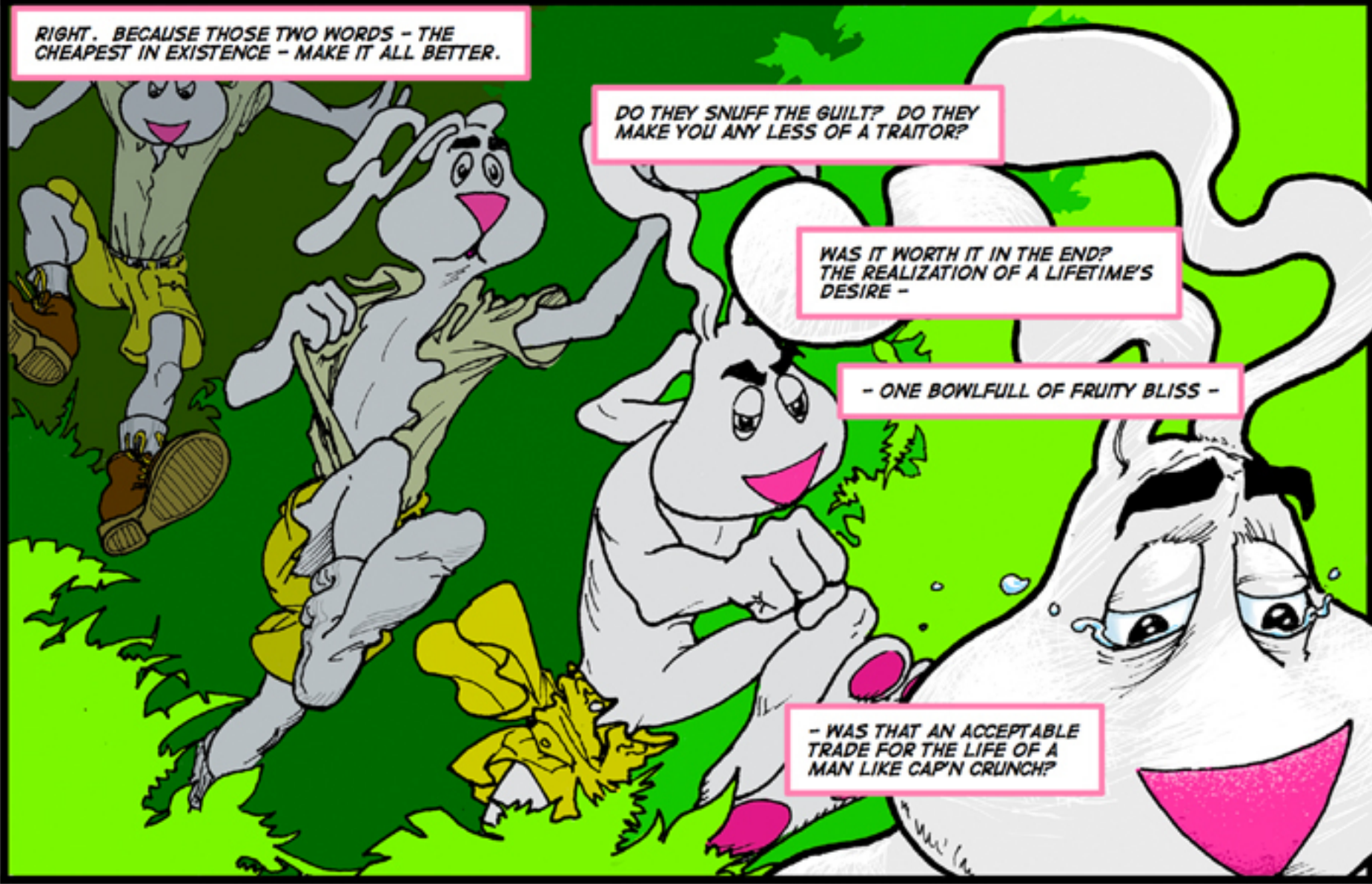


RABBIT, GO AND
FETCH SEA DOG
AND TONY,
QUICK AS A-

NO, I CAN'T!

DON'T YOU SEE?
THIS IS ALL MY
FAULT!

I'M SORRY --
GOD I'M SORRY!



RIGHT. BECAUSE THOSE TWO WORDS - THE
CHEAPEST IN EXISTENCE - MAKE IT ALL BETTER.

DO THEY SNUFF THE GUILT? DO THEY
MAKE YOU ANY LESS OF A TRAITOR?

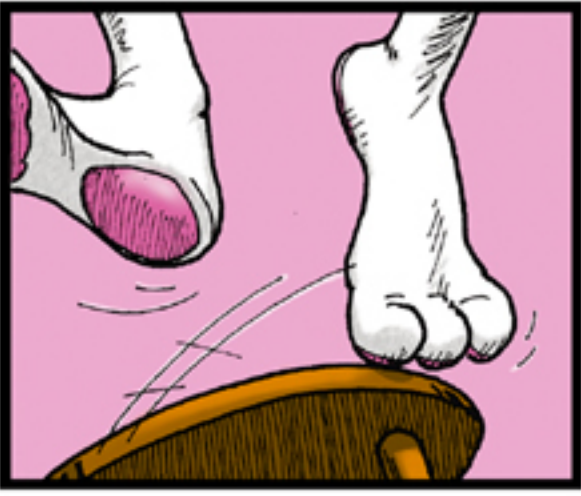
WAS IT WORTH IT IN THE END?
THE REALIZATION OF A LIFETIME'S
DESIRE -

- ONE BOWLFULL OF FRUITY BLISS -

- WAS THAT AN ACCEPTABLE
TRADE FOR THE LIFE OF A
MAN LIKE CAP'N CRUNCH?



YOU'RE A SMART GUY,
YOU KNOW THE ANSWER.



SILLY RABBIT.

IT AS A MORNING THAT WOULD LONG
BE REMEMBERED -- THE MORNING
THAT TOUCAN SAM AND COCO EXITED
THE FOREST BEARING THE LIFELESS
FORM OF CAP'N CRUNCH.

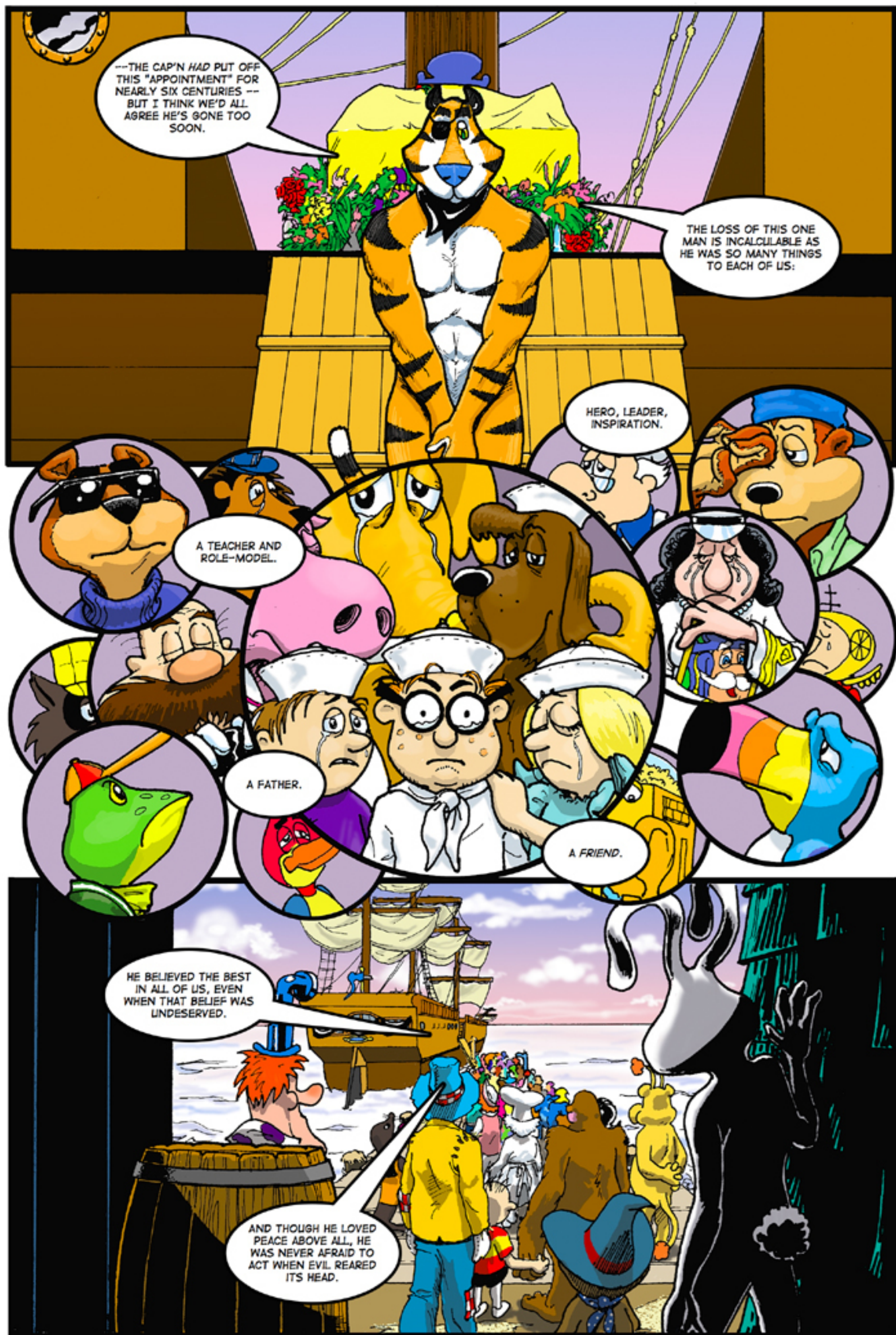
AND THOUGH THAT MORNING WAS
JUST AS BRIGHT AND PLEASANT AS
EVERY OTHER, IT CAME TO BE KNOWN
AS "THE DAY THE SHADOW FELL."

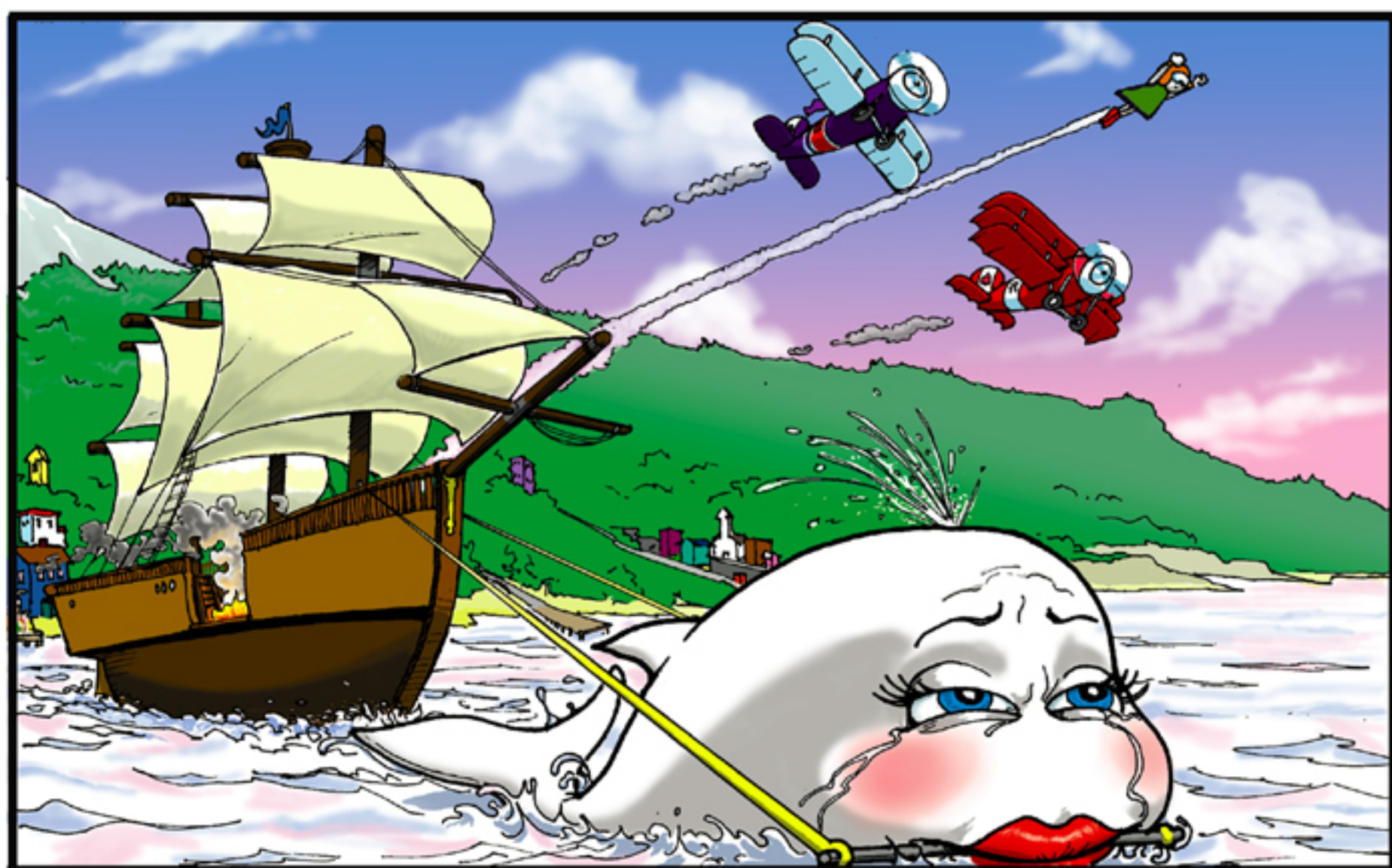
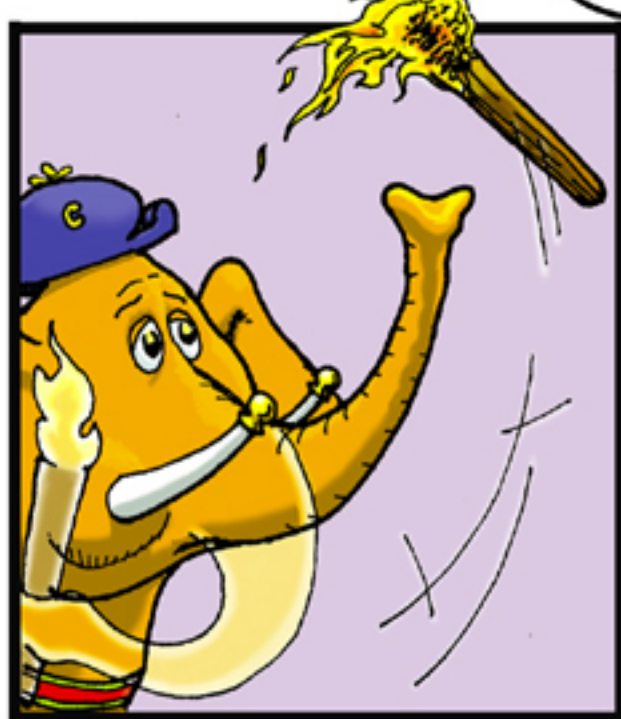
A CHILL HAD CREPT INTO EVERY HEART
THAT COULD NOT BE IGNORED. THE
WORLD HAD SOURED AND ALL FEARED
THAT NOTHING COULD BE DONE TO
PUT THINGS RIGHT AGAIN.

ALL, THAT IS, BUT ONE.

NO ONE WOULD
SUGGEST THAT HE'S
GONE BEFORE HIS
TIME --

CRUNCHUM ETERNUM



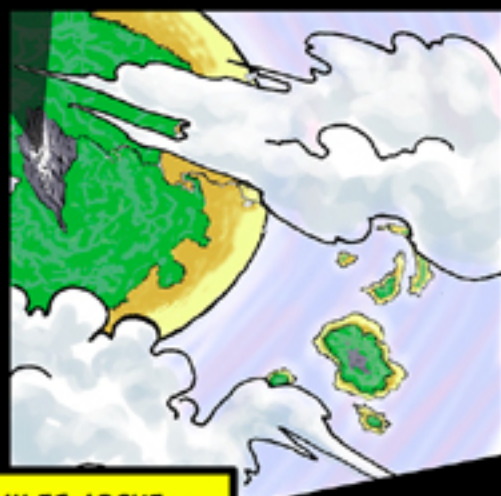




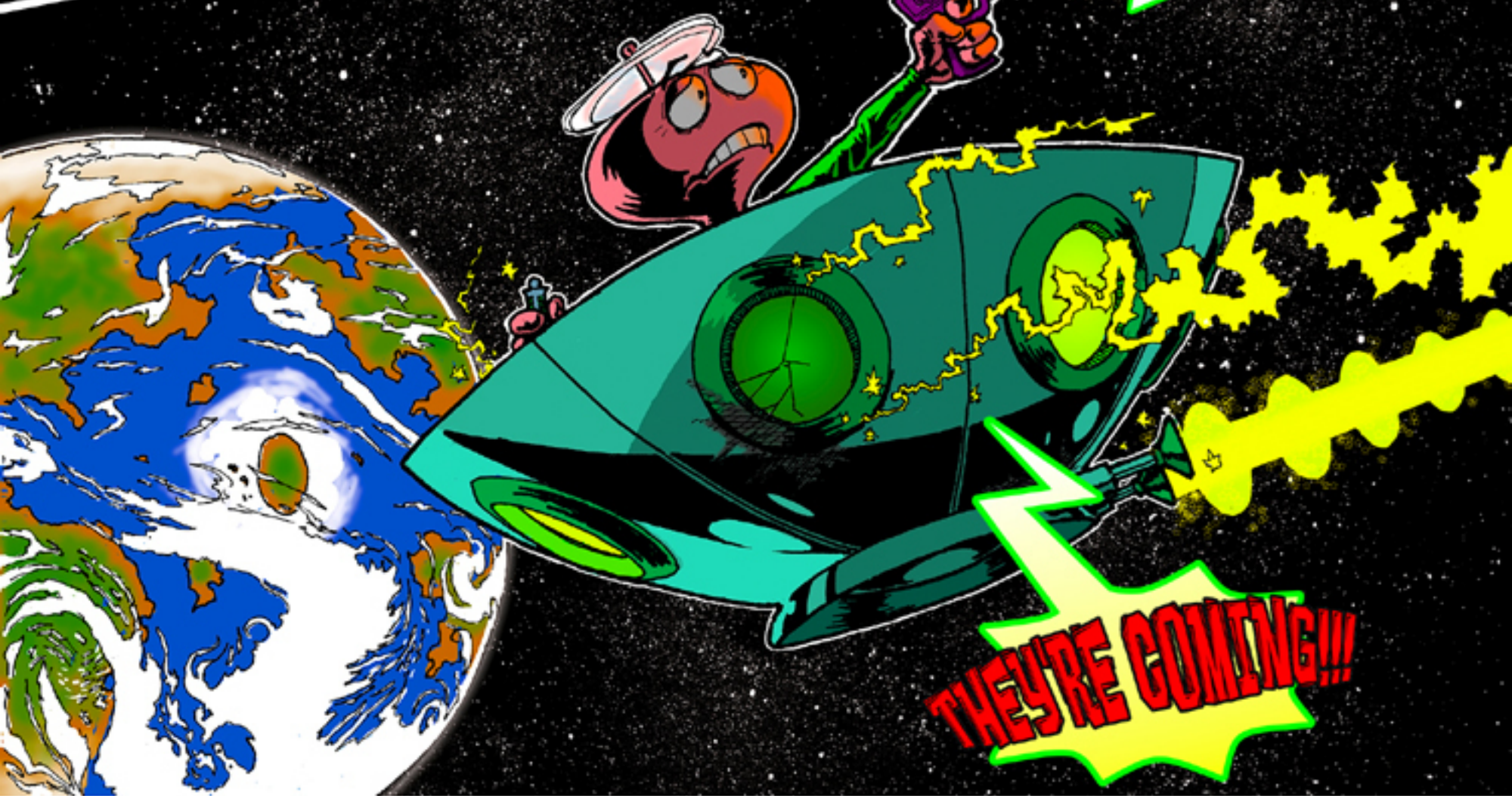
THE S.S. GUPPY GENTLY BURNS AWAY, DRIFTING
TOWARDS ITS LAST HORIZON, WHILE --



-- MILES ABOVE --



-- WE FIND ANOTHER SHIP ON FIRE.



HAVE TO WARN
THE CAP'N -
EVERYBODY -

THEY'RE COMING!!!



SSSHROOOM!